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Expulsions 'decapitate' Soviet spy network

By Bill Gertz
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Soviet intelligence operations in the United States will be "decapitated" by the loss of 80 top spies kicked out in two recent expulsions of Soviet diplomats in Washington, New York and San Francisco, Reagan administration officials said yesterday.

"The heyday of Soviet espionage in the United States is over," said one official.

Calling the latest expulsion "the end of an era," another official said: "The Soviets operated the largest spy network in the world in the United States, but no longer will they have a massive, unchallenged, bloated number of intelligence officers here as some kind of inherent right or special privilege."

"It was a decapitation" of the two Soviet intelligence services, the KGB and the military GRU, the official said. "It has to be a crushing blow to their intelligence operations."

A series of expulsions began Sept.

17, when the administration ordered 25 Soviet diplomats at the United Nations in New York to leave the country. The Soviets retaliated Sunday.

The United States responded Tuesday by expelling 55 additional Soviets. And yesterday, Moscow retaliated by kicking out five more U.S. diplomats and removing 260 Soviet citizens working at the U.S. Embassy in Moscow.

The administration officials, who spoke on the condition of anonymity, said President Reagan would decide what steps to take in the next few

days in response to yesterday's action by the Kremlin.

The officials identified all 55 diplomats, who were ordered out of the United States by Nov. 1, as well as the 25 diplomats expelled last month, as the most senior members of the KGB and GRU "espionage apparatus." They included many spies who had served several three-year tours of duty, the officials said.

The 80 suspected spies were picked from an estimated 300 Soviet intelligence officers operating in the United States, an official said.